

NOTES ON "COROLLARY"

Page one--Here, the first paragraph deals with what might have been and makes a point involving the one thing important to all Negroes--opportunity.

In the second paragraph the pertinent, key factor is the author's preoccupation with an existing "general description" of a criminal. While the police use the term "black" in connection with Negro suspects, the white public will use the term "Negro" or "colored"; newspapers in the South inevitably say "colored" while northern journals use "Negro". Any Negro, on the other hand, would want more specific information--exact skin complexion for instance: because American Negroes range in color from jet black through a variety of browns and yellows to the most fair of so-called "Nordic" complexion types. As well, a Negro would want to know the texture of the suspect's hair in order to proceed with the matter of identification. The police--without knowing why--are often frustrated in apprehending a new Negro criminal; as a result, the Negro community is accused of being uncooperative and of harboring criminals. The truth is--the police just don't know how to enter the Negro community with adequate descriptions of wanted Negro criminals.

Page two--Here, the author uses Headquarters' atmosphere and inter-departmental conflicts to establish the relationship existing between Joe Hill, a Negro detective,

his white colleagues, and his superiors. It is evident from the text--and the point is important--that nowhere along the line is there any racial tension between Joe and his fellow detectives. At the bottom of the page, the narrative swings into the real reason--something which escapes the attention of the white detectives--why Joe wasn't assigned to the case before it began to break.

Page three--The author tells the number of Negro people in Oldhaven's 500,000 total population; and, in effect, states that it is utterly impossible for one Negro detective at Headquarters to guard the interests of the general public when he, alone, has to cope with the criminal element found among 80,000 people.

Page four--Here, the author illustrates the relationship existing between Joe and his superiors. Note that they are friends.

Page five--At the bottom of this page, the reader learns for the first time, concretely, that this is a story about Negroes.

Page six--The first speech the chauffeur makes identifies Joe Hill as being a Negro; also, that speech is an index to the end-product of race discrimination--the man was surprised to encounter a Negro who was a detective, showed it by the expression on his face, and uses a Negro term ("our folks") to say as much. What is more, the chauffeur begins to use the fact of his employer's color, wealth and position as an instrument with which to justify his commission of crime.

Page seven to Page seventeen--In these pages, the author deliberately slows up the story by including considerable detail in connection with police procedure. He does this for the following reasons: (1) to establish the fact that Joe Hill has to do and is doing the work of an actual law-enforcement agent--eventhough Joe Hill, as a Negro, exists as a "token"; (2) to show that each of the several squads involved, with the exception of the Central Bureau, was handicapped by not having Negro members; (3) to show that police work is hard work and to have the reader himself experience the weariness that Joe Hill experienced; (4) to develop the plot; (5) to project Mrs. Stevens as a symbol of white apathy who sees colored people only as an instrument of personal comfort and who feels that their real compensation should hinge upon charity; (6) to show that Negroes are in open, violent conflict with this attitude of white people--eventhough most Negroes (and the chauffeur was one of these) are unaware of their own openness and violence; (7) and finally, to show Mrs. Stevens as a symbol of the type of white person who lives and enters the shadow of death--without ever realizing that their own material interests are directly affected by the attitude of Negro people.

Page Seventeen--Here, the author, for the first time in the story, begins to describe Joe Hill as a man by bringing him into direct contact with a Negro woman who, just like Joe, is also a "token"--a matter which is political in its nature.

Page Eighteen--At the bottom of page seventeen and on to the end of the sequence on page eighteen, the author uses the white taxi-cab driver as a symbol of the great American white public with a stereotyped image of Negroes. This type is never aware that it is a source of irritation; that the more it talks--even with intent to be friendly--it only grows more irritating.

Page Nineteen--At this point, the author creates the illusion of an independent second story. It is to be remembered that the crimes of Johnson were committed in conjunction with four white confederates--and that those crimes were committed against white property. At no point has the writer or any of his characters said anything to infer that any crime has been committed against the Negro community.

Page Twenty--Here, both Chief Belden and Inspector Duffy feel that they must explain Joe Hill's background. However, their explanation is motivated by a prejudice which arises out of a cause altogether independent of Joe's race and color.

Page Twenty-one--Here, the author intended that the reader would have the experience of reading two independent stories--this sensation, if the reader feels it, is akin to the feeling Negroes have by living simultaneously in a Jim Crow community and a white world. However, at the same time the connection between the two elements involved with segregation begins to show itself.

Page Twenty-six--At the top of this page, the author develops the fundamental conflict which exists between apathetic white people and ignorant Negro people. The child's speech--a long one involving religion--in the middle of the page illustrates the avenue of escape such a type of Negro usually attempts to use--a means inevitably leading to exploitation by a caliber of Negro criminal difficult for the law to handle. Note that this criminal's crime appears senselessly brutal and that it is committed without fear that the victims will appeal to law-enforcement agencies for protection, assistance and relief.

CONCLUSION--The theme of "Corollary" is summed up on page 10 by Inspector Duffy who tells Joe:

"Too bad we couldn't spare you when this case first got going. Ten to one, you'd have done what the other boys' faces didn't let them do--pick up Johnson's trail. Maybe you'd have run into him there--at the Mattox--before all the killings started".

A Negro hotel is the very last place in a Negro community where a white law-enforcement agent can acquire information about Negro criminals; and it was in this very institution that a Negro criminal got the information with which he intended to seize a white person's money--money that white person had set aside as a source of charity for Negroes themselves.